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The Desert Sun is a bi-monthly publication for the staff and volunteers of the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center.

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Mission Impossible in Kabul?

By Paula L. Pedene APR

John Fears, Medical Center Director...your mission should you decide to accept it, is to travel to a war torn nation and help them reenergize their women's hospital. The hospital has contaminated water, sewage problems, hundreds of infection control issues, a high death rate, and inexperienced management and no funding to fix the problems. Should you decide to accept this mission you will leave in three weeks. This message will self-destruct in ten seconds.

It appeared to be a Mission Impossible, but this time it wasn't a fiction story it was reality. Medical Center Director John Fears decided to tackle this assignment when he was notified on September 17th, 2003. He left his current station at the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center in Phoenix and was on the plane to Kabul, Afghanistan on October 2nd. He remained in Kabul for two months.

His mission is memorable. "The picture that stands out in my mind is the first day I walked into the facility. It was unbelievably crowded, dirty, smelled badly, and the hospital was in incredible disrepair. They delivered 90 babies that day (two on the outside steps of the hospital). As I walked in, I walked around a group of Afghan women who were shielding, by spreading their Burkas, a mother who was delivering outside the hospital. It was overwhelming," he said.



The staff of the women's hospital prepares to start thier day in the medical office.

He volunteered for the assignment after hearing the announcement on the Friday Director's conference call. The mission was to assist in rebuilding the Rabia Balkhi Women's Hospital. He was the first in a group of VA executives to help provide support to the women's hospital in Kabul Afghanistan

"Why I volunteered is a difficult question. Probably a combination of a search for "adventure", a desire



The crowded conditions of Kabul are noted here in this photo.

to do something that meant a lot, and an inner moral tugging that urged me to do something that we as Americans need to do. I had recently had a discussion with my son about the latest developments in the world and whether or not we should be doing what we are doing. This gave me a chance to see first hand what was happening and to look at these developments without the "screening" that occurs by politicians and the media," said Fears.

Upon his arrival, the maternal death rate was 1600 deaths in 100,000 deliveries in Afghanistan. In the US we think it's unacceptable



John Fears wearing a bullet proof vest outside the hospital as he prepares to travel off site

to have six out of 100,000. So in essence, their rate is nearly 300 times as high as the United States. He also learned that only one in five babies survives past the age of five and prenatal care is virtually nonexistent. That meant knowing that many of the babies they were sending home would really go home to die. The whole area was crowded and they had crowds outside the hospitals because no male visitors were allowed inside. That's pretty tough when you have 80-100 admissions per day so there were a lot of people who wanted to get in but couldn't. All this plus there was basically no electricity, sporadic plumbing with tons of sewage problems and a high infection rate.

His personal living conditions were similar. He was housed in U.S. military housing that was a compound of older Afghan homes leased by the military and protected by walling off and fortifying the area in which the homes were located. Each room in the homes were used for multiple purposes but basically housed up to 12 persons by putting bunk beds in all available space. Two of the homes were used as dining facilities where meals were prepared for all. Here they served American style cafeteria food. Some of the civilians would also eat once or twice a week in local restaurants that served local food.

"Sleeping was no problem. I slept in my sleeping bag on an army cot that had a three-inch foam pad on it. The room I was in was a storage room in the rear of the

See Mission page

Our Financial Outlook By Richard Pasquale, CFO

Several weeks ago, after a long wait, VA's FY2004 budget was enacted. Overall, the VA health care appropriations rose by slightly more than 10% over the previous year. An important change included in this budget is a splitting of the VA health care appropriation into three parts.

Due to the complex process of implementing the new three-way subdivision of health care funds, VA's Central Office has yet to finalize FY2004 allocations to the networks. However, relying upon preliminary data, VISN 18 Headquarters has announced that Phoenix' increase is tentatively \$15.5 million. Our other principal revenue source, the collection of patient co-payments and insurance reimbursements, has leveled off after several years of dramatic increases.

Approximately \$5 million of the expected \$15.5 million will go towards recent pay raises. Rapidly swelling fund control point spending will consume another \$10 million. Pharmaceuticals, community nursing home care, and fee basis services are among the many areas where fund control point spending is rising faster than funding. As a consequence of these spending pressures, we are only able to support greater staffing by deferring outlays in some areas, such as capital investments in facilities and equipment.

That deferral of certain spending allows us to fund an FY2004 staff level of nearly 1980 full-time equivalents (FTE). This is a significant increase over last year's average employment of 1882 FTE. The vast majority of the new hires are focused

in patient care areas.

We are also advocating a change in VISN 18's process for funding allocations. We produced a series of reports and analyses that demonstrated the need to base allocations on recent patient workloads. We remain optimistic that this information will lead to additional funds for the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center and clinics this fiscal year, so that we may proceed with spending in those areas temporarily deferred.

As we look to the future, an important planning consideration is assuring that recurring costs, such as staffing, can be sustained by future appropriations. For us, next year presents the challenge of supporting this year's all-time high level of staff plus the new Thunderbird Community Clinic. Although FY2005 appropriations are far from certain,

initial indications are that we will be hard pressed to add staffing not related to the Thunderbird Clinic.

With ever-rising numbers of patients relying upon us for care and an environment of tight federal budgets, it is incumbent upon all employees to strive to deliver care in as cost effective manner as possible. It is also important that everyone support the process of billing insurers and billing patient co-payments. Among the various requirements are identifying insurance, distinguishing between service connected and non-service connected care, and accurate coding. With an ardent commitment to quality, compassionate, cost effective care, we should be able to effectively respond to the record number of Arizona's veterans coming through our doors, this year and beyond.



Dona Dougherty,
Retired Nurse Practitioner,
Gold Clinic

In this issue of the Desert Sun the "Leaving A Legacy" selectee is retired Nurse Practitioner Dona Dougherty RN, MS, ANP-C. With the "Leaving a Legacy" campaign we wanted to capture some of Dougherty's thoughts about what she has done to make her career successful for both herself and our patients. Dougherty has worked with VA for more than 25 years. The questions posed to her are based on Stephen's Covey's "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People". Our congratulations go to retired Nurse Practitioner Dona Dougherty on her selection as our "Leaving A Legacy" awardee. If you'd like to nominate someone for this honor that is three years out or nearing retirement please send the nominee and your reasons for the nomination to prphoenix@med.va.gov.

What steps did you do to take initiative or make things happen for you in your career?

As a staff nurse, I discussed with my supervisor about the criteria for promotion. I also was active on committees, in particular the Policy and Procedure Committee. As a Nurse Practitioner (NP) I requested the assignment and spent 3 years on the Professional Standards Board. I made the decision to go back to school when I was asked to teach a class, but informed that another nurses name would have to go on the paperwork because she had a degree and I didn't. I utilized the VA opportunities to get as much of my school paid for as possible. I went to night school at University of Phoenix to get my BSN and then attended ASU for my Masters and NP program. This process took me five years to complete and I spent eight years as a NP before retiring. I felt it was well worth the effort and expense. My out of pocket expense

was about 8,000 dollars, and I had that back within the first year as a NP.

When beginning a project or setting a goal, how does seeing the "big picture help you when completing the project or reaching the goal?

We are all working to make things better for our veterans and our co-workers; if the project was in this direction then it was worthy.

How do handle you work when you have multiple tasks going on all at once?

Prioritizing and delegating are of prime importance. When you are achieving advanced practice responsibilities you cannot continue to do all the staff nurse responsibilities. The nurses I worked with were outstanding. They understood that I could draw the blood, or give the shot myself, but then who would be seeing my next patient?

Sometimes when there isn't help for all of the tasks required, doing a good job sometimes requires overtime. You can only take care of one patient at a time.

What do you do when you have a goal that is not being met?

I used to lay awake at night and try to plan better organization, and mentally review what I could change to get the job done faster or better. I utilized the resources around me, questioning the physicians and other providers as to how they accomplished their goals. Sometimes you have to rework your goal, as it may be conflicting with another. The patient comes first and if he/she needs that extra time then the goal of providing excellent patient care comes before the goal of not being late for the next patient.

What steps do you take to make sure that you understand what your co-workers and supervisors are trying to communicate to you? And what do you do to make sure you are clearly understood by co-workers and supervisors?

Watching body language and the expressions on faces gives you good clues that others understand you. If in doubt I ask them to repeat what I said to make sure we are both on the same page. There are always times

when we say things in the wrong way and someone gets their feelings hurt. As much as possible I have always gone to the person to try and resolve the problem.

When working with others in a group, what do you do to help build teamwork and to make sure that the group is effective?

Listening to the other opinions is extremely important. I also believe in setting time limits on meetings and definite dates when you plan to be finished on projects.

In what ways do you encourage or reward others and yourself on a job well done?

Saying thank you to others, especially where co-workers can hear it, is always welcome. For myself, I go home and brag to my family about my accomplishments.

If this all sounds too good to be true, it is. We only try, sometimes we succeed and sometimes we don't. But it is amazing that when you are retired and gone, you miss the people you worked with and the patients you took care of, and only seem to remember the good parts.





Supervisory Patient
Advocate Susan Colvin

In this issue we continue to highlight an outstanding employee through our Role Model campaign. With the Role Model campaign we hope to select people every other month in the Desert Sun that have proven they are competent professionals in their career, in fact so much so, that they have proven themselves to stand out as role models for others to follow. This month our selectee is Susan Colvin, Supervisory Patient Advocate at our VA. The following questions, based on VA's High Performance Development Model, were posed to Colvin and she answered accordingly. Our congratulations go to Susan Colvin on her selection as the Role Model campaign awardee. If you'd like to nominate someone for this honor please send the nominee and your reasons for the nomination to prphoenix@med.va.gov.

Personal Mastery and Technical Skill:

How did you find or make time to develop your professional and technical competency to help you climb the "corporate ladder"?

Finding time was never a problem because I have truly enjoyed all the different jobs I have had at this facility. If your mindset is to come to work with the attitude of doing the best job you can do every day, the climb up the corporate ladder is done a rung at a time without being aware you are doing so. The only true goal I set for myself was to consistently try to do the absolute best I can.

Interpersonal Effectiveness:

What special things did you do when dealing with others to ensure your team succeeded?

As a supervisor, the most important thing is to instill in your team trust; to let them know we are all in this together; that each one of the

team members have an important role in accomplishing our goals. No one of us has a lesser role in that endeavor. Being honest with all involved and always letting employees know you are available instills harmony and willingness for everyone to work together.



Customer Service: Which personal values do you feel help you provide excellent customer service to your employees and others?

To always strive to put yourself in your customer's shoes and look at any issue from their viewpoint is, in my opinion, the key to success in providing excellent customer service. Even before I had the title of Patient Advocate, I always considered myself a people advocate.

Flexibility and Adaptability: How do you stay flexible and adapt to requests that have been made of you?

Ever since I have been a supervi-

sor (over 15 years), I have always had an open door policy with employees. I think it is important to be accessible to your customers even though you may have to put certain projects or responsibilities on the back burner for a time. Prioritizing your work is essential in order to meet all of the demands on your time.

Creative Thinking:

How do you create and develop ideas that improve your work environment?

The most important quality one can have in my opinion is listening to the people you work with. It is amazing what a little brainstorming can do. Also, developing a network of your peers is essential. Listening to how they tackle a project and then tweaking it to meet your needs is usually successful.

System Thinking:

How do you integrate your personal commitment into your work environment?

I have never had a problem with conflicting commitment to my personal and work environment

because I always had a back up plan and kept the communication lines open in both areas of my life. The most essential attribute you must have to overcome obstacles is to be proud of who you are and what you do. I truly believe processes just fall into place. I have always believed it takes less energy to smile and has the added benefit of making you feel better. You have to love what you do and I guess I have been fortunate enough to love being a VA employee as well as a wife and mother and now a grandmother.

Organizational Stewardship:

How do you encourage organizational accountability and develop a sense of belonging for both yourself and/or your staff?

You have to instill a sense of pride in employees for the work they do for the organization and I believe the only way to do this is by example. It is all about attitude. A smile is ALWAYS the shortest distance between two people!

Carl T. Hayden VAMC Employee of the Month



Corina Mascarenas,
Medical Support Assistant,
Geriatrics and Extended
Care Service

Corina Mascarenas, Medical Support Assistant, Geriatrics and Extended Care Service, was selected as the Carl T. Hayden Veterans Affairs Medical Center Employee of the Month for February 2004. Mascarenas has worked at the CTHVAMC for 19 years. She spends her days transcribing doctor's orders, processing patient admissions and discharges, scheduling clinic appointments, and ordering supplies. She serves as a receptionist and also a translator for the medical staff for Spanish speaking veterans among many other tasks.

In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her family, camping, planning family parties, four wheeling, traveling, and cooking.

Mascarenas was born and raised in Ajo, Arizona, and has lived in Phoenix for 20 years. She and her husband Felipe have been married for 16 years. They have a son Michael who is 13 years old and a daughter Nichelle who is 7 years old.



Elleen Pierce, Nurse Practitioner, GECS, was selected as the Carl T. Hayden Veterans Affairs Medical Center Employee of the Month for March 2004. Pierce has worked at the CTHVAMC for 10 years. She spends her days attending to patients in the Copper outpatient clinic. Spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, post-polio, and those with primary non-malignant tumors causing paralysis affect some of the patients she sees. She assesses patients' health status, makes recommendations, and prescribes treatments to maintain health and prevent complications. Pierce participates in various hospital committees and gives monthly classes to nursing staff.

In her spare time, she volunteers at the City of Phoenix in the Parks and Recreation Department. She enjoys gardening and intermittently has tropical fish and rabbits as pets.

Pierce and her husband Jack have been married for 27 years and reside in Glendale. They have one daughter Lorraine, son-in-law Tom, two granddaughters Katie and Jessica and a spoiled Bichon Frise dog named Julie.



Elleen Pierce, Nurse
Practitioner, GECS

Interested service/department chairs and assistant administrators can nominate an employee by writing a Nomination for Employee of the Month memorandum and submitting it to the Chairperson, Employee Relations Committee (002) by the second Wednesday of the month. All recommendations for Employee of the Month should be based on the VHA core values: Trust, Respect, Excellence, Commitment, Compassion. Employees of the Month receive \$150, a "star" pin, a parking spot for the month, and a Values Shine Certificate. Please see Policy Memorandum No. 05-24, Employee Awards and Recognition, for more guidance.



Highlights Around The Medical Center

By Jennifer L. Dibert

- **Marva Greene**, Administrator Informatics Service, is currently a candidate in the 2003b Executive Career Field Program (ECF). The goal of ECF is to enhance the leadership development of potential employees who are in mid-management and senior staff positions in medical centers, Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) and VA Central Office who are interested in advancing to the next level within VHA. Target positions of the candidates are Associate Directors of medical centers, Nurse Executives, and positions of higher responsibility in VISNs and Central Office. Greene was accepted into the program in April 2003. The two-year program will end in June 2005. During this time, she will participate in activities within the medical center, VISN and Central Office to provide her with experiences and exposure to different roles and responsibilities beyond her current scope that will prepare her for one of the different target positions.

In addition to this accomplishment, Greene recently passed the American Healthcare College of Executive examination, which provides her the distinction as a Certified Healthcare Executive (CHE).

- **Tony DeFrancesco** has been appointed Chair, Nutrition & Food Service Standard Users Group (SUG), a national committee that is responsible for assisting in negotiation of food contracts for VA across the country. In this leadership role, DeFrancesco is able to help VA garner its patient meal needs at the best possible rates for VA as a whole.
- **Dr. Keith Piatt** was listed as one of the Top Doctor's in Phoenix in the Internal Medicine Section of the latest issue of *Phoenix Magazine*.
- **Barbara Harvey** is the first VA nurse to be president of the Phoenix Oncology Nurses Society. Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) chartered Phoenix Oncology Nursing Society as an affiliate in 1982. Its goal is to uphold the mission statement of ONS, which is to promote excellence in oncology nursing and quality cancer care at the

local level through educational opportunities. This is done through monthly educational meetings, scholarships for school and conferences. PONS also provides nurse-to-nurse networking with over 200 oncology nurses who are members.

- **Carolyn Bennett** was presented the Arizona PeriAnesthesia Nurses Association (AzPANA) Presidential Award Saturday, January 24, 2004! Many PACU nurses nominated Bennett though out the state due to her dedication to AzPANA and perianesthesia nursing. Bennett has served on the AzPANA Board of Directors in various capacities for five years and continues to be actively involved in the organization even though she now works in Interventional Radiology. In this VAMC alone with Bennett's encouragement we now have three RN's that are Certified Ambulatory Perianesthesia Nurses and five RN's including Bennett, that are dual certified in perianesthesia nursing (Certified Post Anesthesia Nurse and Certified Ambulatory Perianesthesia Nurse).

- **Mary Sullivan RN** (from the Southeast VA Extension Clinic and one of our Forensic Nurses) has been awarded the Alumni Merit Award for the School of Nursing from Creighton University for the year 2004. She will be presented the award on Wednesday, May 5th in conjunction with Nurses Week Activities at Creighton, in Omaha, Nebraska.

- **Terri Elsholz**, Risk Manager was elected as Secretary for 2004 for the AZ Society for Healthcare Risk Management (AzSHRM).



Terri Elsholz

- **Pathology and Laboratory Medicine** recently received their accreditation from the College of American Pathologists' (CAP) Laboratory Accreditation Program through an on-site inspection. In addition to that, they have passed the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB) inspection. Congratulations to Pathology and Laboratory Medicine for providing excellent services!

Pathology and Laboratory Medicine also has two lab employees that are in the VA mentorship program- **Patrick Forsy and Paul Mason**.

Additionally, from the Lab, **Jeff Marx** was selected for the Leadership Development Institute. During three one-week sessions over 8 months, Marx will work on projects with a mentor. And lab employees, **Melba Nieto** was selected as the Asian Pacific Islander EEO program manager and **Amanda Footracer** is the Native American EEO program manager.

- Joyce Lemons presented **Father Ken Kleiber** as the second



Father Ken Kleiber with Joyce Lemons

prizewinner in the 2003 Pastor of the Year contest through the Crossings Book Club on Wednesday, February 25th. Kleiber is a Catholic priest and the Chief of Chaplains at CTHVAMC. Lemons nominated Kleiber for always being there to pray and provide support for veterans and their families.

- **Neil Patterson**, MS, a Readjustment Counseling Therapist, in PCT Mental Health Department developed a strong Co-occurring Disorders Program along with **Jama Carpenter**, which focuses specifically on Dually Diagnosed veterans who suffer with chemical abuse and dependence problems in conjunction with mental illness issues. This comprehensive program appears to be very successful and continues to grow in interest and participation by the veterans. From this program he has moved to PCT and is now coordinating the Continuing Care Track of the clinic running approximately 9 to 12 groups weekly including primary introductory classes on PTSD.

- **Christine Jolly** received the Nursing Outstanding Performance Family Practice Clinics award.



Christine Jolly

During her time at Luke Air Force Base, she worked in the family practice clinics. Jolly was assigned the Infection Control Monitor for

four clinics and completed four JACHO infection control books, cared for 1,900-3,800 patients in telephone triage, and helped run a clinic while supervising seven technicians.

- The United Blood Services presented "**Saki**" **Kawasaki** with the 2003 Hero Award. This award signifies an outstanding leadership role in blood drive coordination. This award is given to the coordinator and organization that works above and beyond to achieve success at their sponsored blood drives—providing the largest impact on blood donations to the Arizona blood supply.

- **Diabetics 4 Diabetics**

By Patty Hamm

A diabetic health fair was held on February 28th at Bill Heard Chevrolet Dealership on East McDowell. The CTHVAMC Community Relations Committee had nine volunteers at this event, which offered the following services: blood sugar testing, blood pressure screening and lung function/capacity testing. It



Left side (back to front) Leslie Tilt, Patty Hayward. Right side (back to front) Lezlie Cohn-Oswald, Sharon Newman-Matt, and Evelyn Roscizewski

was a fun filled day for all 50 participants. **Dr. William (Bill) Branson** sponsored the event and sent our VA thank you note saying,

"I got the chance to meet some very, very nice people from the VA and I never thought there was so much goodness in one organization. You all made everyone feel special, including me, and I sincerely appreciate that from the bottom of my heart. I want you guys to always be a part of Diabetics 4 Diabetics, because it's people like you that make us a success." Thank you to the volunteers-**Pat Jacobs, Cindi Sjogren, Sharon Newman-Matt, and JoAnn Dawson** from Respiratory Therapy; **Everlyn Roscizewski, Patty Hayward** from Nursing, and **Lezlie Cohn-Oswald** and daughter **Leslie** from Pharmacy; and **Patty Hamm**-Inpatient Care.

Cont. on page 5



Highlights Around The Medical Center

Cont. from page 4

- On March 6th, 2004, the Red Cross presented **Jo Jackson** with the Real Hero 2004 Award for the military category. The University of Phoenix nominated Jackson for the award. The nomination read as follows: "Jo is a United States Marine Corps veteran who says she is rewarded daily by helping other veterans become self-sufficient through employment. These men and women have served our country and now face numerous challenges, either as a result of their service or because of personal issues. Jo's reward is a smile when a veteran receives that first paycheck and is able to move from a shelter to a real home. The enjoyment she receives from watching self-esteem and confidence return to a person who had little hope is unlike anything else. She views her work at Carl T. Hayden Veteran's Affairs as a calling, rather than a job. Her passion for these veterans makes her the candidate of choice for the Military Real Heroes Award."
- Congratulations to **Katherine Austin** who received her Masters of Business Administration in Health Care Management last May from the University of Phoenix.



Arzey Holcomb, one of the many veterans to receive roses donated by Trader Joes

- On Sunday, February 15th the Trader Joes on Camelback and 20th Street donated 300 dozen roses to hospitalized patients at the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center. Thanks to the donation there were more than enough roses to give to each patient who was on the ward that day and to several visitors. Korean War Veteran **Arzey Holcomb** is pictured here with his roses. "It helped to brighten my day and I was able to share some with my granddaughter so it was a nice surprise," he said. The week of February 8-15th is National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans week and we thank Trader Joes for this wonderful donation.
- Patient Services Assistant, **Sam Esquivel** is the State Director for League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and he believes in empowering those that have the talent and who express the desire to "take the bull by the horns" and make positive changes for the Hispanic community. Esquivel's success with LULAC is reflected in the forty percent increase in mem-

bership during his term and the addition of fifteen new councils. His vision for the establishment of a permanent headquarters for LULAC in Phoenix, and expansion of new councils in Northern Arizona is his ultimate goal to bring greater success for this nation non-profit organization. LULAC has affiliated itself with other non-profit organizations, local and state to advance the Hispanic community and the awareness of the needs of Hispanic veterans.

LULAC has been in Arizona for 53 years with the National Headquarters in Washington D.C. and councils in all 50 states including Hawaii and Puerto Rico.

Esquivel has been with LULAC for five years and served as the State Director for Arizona since May 2003.

- **Steve Garber** has successfully completed the requirements for the Competent Leader Award from Toastmasters International. To achieve Competent Leader status, participants must complete a series of rigorous assignments, which include serving on the club's executive committee and conducting training seminars to strengthen the club. Garber's accomplishment benefits our veterans as he conducts daily group benefit presentations for veterans applying for VA health care.

- Congratulations to **Mary Begaye**, Computer Specialist, Help Desk, IRM, for winning the Gold Medal in the recent Arizona Senior Olympics, held at Arizona State University. Mary, and her basketball team, the Anasazi Ladies, won a gold medal by going undefeated in their two-day event. Mary's next quest is the National Senior Olympics in Philadelphia.
- **Mike Smith**, a former VA employee in Medical Records, would like to thank the entire CTHVAMC for donations of leave time, the friendships he made, and the help he received over the last eight years especially during his illness.
- In honor of **Doctor's Day** our VA celebrated the event with approximately 125 doctors who attended a buffet style luncheon in the ACC Basement on March 16th. Medical Center Director **John Fears** shared his presentation on his time spent at the women's hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan. We thank our physicians for their hard work and dedication to our veterans!



Doctor's Day Luncheon

Hearts of Courageous Patriots Who Risked Their Lives in the Name of Liberty and Justice

There are many patriots in which have not yet been found and to these Courageous men

*Who were so willing to give their all to protect and preserve
Our freedom*

*We owe them much gratitude
Many of these quiet heroes show
Great honor and strong wills
They sacrifice so much for our nation.*

*Americans need to always keep faith
With those who have served our nation with*

*Honor, integrity, and great sacrifice
Our nation needs to remember those who are still missing
And honor those who were imprisoned during war.*

*We as Americans should honor our nation's prisoners of war
They have suffered many hardships while in enemy captivity
Many soldiers were lost or wounded*

*We should keep our commitment to finding those who are still
Missing in action.*

*There are many families of those who are missing in action
Many of them would gladly give everything just to hear the words
"I'm home"*

*Yet there are still many American soldiers who remain lost
Even 20 years after war*

Their unfound souls still haunt us as a nation.

There is a day for our prisoners of war and men missing in action

In one of the ceremonies there is a table of missing men

The table is round to show the everlasting concern for the missing men

*The white tablecloth symbolizes the purity of their motives when they answered to the
call of duty.*

*A single red rose lies in a vase to remind us of the life of each of the men missing, and
the loved ones and friends of those Americans who keep the faith, waiting for answers.*

*The vase has a red ribbon tied around it to display the constant
determination to account for our missing.*

*The vase has a red ribbon tied around it to display the constant
determination to account for our missing*

*A slice of lemon is on the bread plate to remind us of the bitter fate of those
Captured and missing in foreign land*

*A pinch of salt symbolizes the tears endured by those missing and their families
Who seek answers.*

*A Bible represents the strength gained through faith to carry on those lost from our
country, founded as one nation under God*

The glass is inverted to symbolize their inability to share the evening's toast.

The chairs are empty, for they are still missing.

*"You, who personify patriotism, you, who care for your countrymen; you who never
forget a comrade"- I salute you."*

Service Line News

Clinical Service

Digital Improvements in Voice Evaluations

by Ernie Button

As the instrumentation used in the medical field continues to change, physicians and clinicians change with it. These improvements in technology allow us to evaluate our patients more effectively. The Audiology and Speech Language Pathology Department recently purchased and is currently using a digital upgrade for their Laryngeal Videendoscopy & Stroboscopy machine (LVES). LVES has been in use here at the CTHVAMC since 1997 but the older system utilized videotapes to record and playback exams. The improved technology also allows for easier storage and recall of exams by storing the exam on a hard drive and allowing archiving of exams to DVD's thus eliminating the use of videotape. The digital upgrade allows the clinician clearer views of the vocal cords as they vibrate.

LVES allows a Speech Language Pathologist to visualize the vocal cords at rest or when a person makes a voice. A halogen light is used to illuminate the vocal cords in their resting position or when vibrating. The strobe light function allows the clinician to view the vocal cords as if they were moving in slow motion. Both a magnifying rigid scope and a flexible scope can be used with LVES. A rigid scope is passed orally, just past the base of the tongue to see the vocal cords. The flexible scope is passed through the nose to obtain a view of the pharynx (i.e. from the soft palate to the larynx) and larynx (a.k.a. "voice box"). LVES does not replace a thorough exam from an ear, nose and throat doctor. Rather it is an extension of the physician's exam with an emphasis on vocal cord function and potential therapy. The digital improvements with LVES allows the Speech Language Pathologist to visualize how to best provide therapy and/or recommendations for the patient to improve their voicing difficulties.

Office of the Director

National Volunteer Week

Have you ever wondered what our Medical Center would be without the extra hands that help us transport inpatients within the

hospital, drive approximately 240,000 miles each year to assure veterans seek the medical attention they need, the number of hands that hold the hands of our veteran patients, or the number of people whose impact touches veterans who have no one else?

National Volunteer Week will be observed April 18 -24, 2004. This is a special week to recognize and observe the valuable service our 1,000 volunteers provide the Medical Center and its veteran patients. Without the commitment, the loyalty, and the desire to serve those we serve, each of us could not accomplish what we do without the valuable service of our volunteers.

Take the time during National Volunteer Week, to thank your volunteers for being a valuable member of our team, and recognize them for the contributions they provide each and every day!

Student Volunteer Program

Summer is quickly approaching, which means vacations, school break, and student volunteers! There is not a more constructive means for our youth, ages 14 and older, to spend their summer months than volunteering, and giving their time to the men and women who have served our country so diligently and courageously.

The VA Student Volunteer Program is an excellent opportunity for students to receive high-level exposure and direct access to many aspects associated with the medical field. Many of our students have furthered their education in the fields of medicine, nursing, radiology, and physical therapy.

The primary purpose of this program is to allow students to gain work related experience, instill upon them valuable work ethics, and provide them career exploration. Likewise, it is a mentoring opportunity for our staff.

This year's Student Volunteer Program will begin on Monday, June 7, 2004, at 9 a.m. in the Northeast and Southeast Conference Rooms in the ACC. Joint Commission requires each student to attend annual training. It is important that new and existing students attend this June 7th Orientation.

If you have any questions, please contact Sheila Beran-Parker at 602-222-6419.

History of the VA Police

by Jason Blair

When the Veterans Administration was established in 1930, VA Police began as the "VA Protective Service," assigned the role of maintaining order, protecting persons and property, and providing fire safety services. As the VA evolved the fire safety role was turned over to Engineering Service and the "Protective Service" became a security guard force.

In 1973, by an Act of Congress and presidential signature, the guard force was abolished and the VA Police was established. This evolution was brought about due to the changing needs of the VA and an increase of police related matters that could not be handled by a guard force or local law enforcement agency.

All VA Police applicants must have a minimum of two years law enforcement experience with arrest authority (obtained through Federal, State, County, Municipal Police experience or through service as a Military Police Officer), or have an Associate's or Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice. Applicants must also undergo an extensive physical examination, psychological evaluation and background investigation.

Upon selection VA Police Officers go through an intensive five-week training course at the Law Enforcement Training Center located at the North Little Rock VAMC in Arkansas. Additionally, VA Police Officers receive continuous in-service and specialized training. VA Police Officers are certified in CPR (as First Responders), use of Chemical Irritant Projector (O.C. spray), PR-24 Police side handle baton, and the Beretta 9 mm firearm.

Since 1986, seven VA Police Officers have died in the line of duty. They are:

Officer Marvin Bland

1985 – auto accident

Officer Leonard Wilcox

1986 – gunshot

Officer Mark Decker

1986 – gunshot

(Officers Wilcox and Decker were killed in the same incident)

Agent Ronald Hearn

1988 – gunshot

Officer Garry Ross

1990 – heart attack

Officer Horst Woods

1996 – gunshot

Officer Jose Rodriguez-Reyes

2002 – gunshot

These VA Police Officers' names are on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington DC.

Education and Research

by Nancy Bullard

The Research Department has relocated from building 21 to building 27, room 102. With this move, the department gained the use of a new conference room and nice workstations. Research welcomes the addition of Grace Moreno who has joined the team as a Program Support Assistant. In honor of Research Week, we are having a day of celebration on April 13th and welcome individuals to stop by for a tour and checkout what's new in Research.

Home Based Primary Care (HBPC)

Geriatrics and Extended Care

by Michelle Roberts

Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) is a program established to help veterans receive health care at home and reduce the need for medical center visits. An interdisciplinary team of VA staff including nurses, a dietitian, social worker, and kinesiologist provide care in the home. Registered nurses are the case managers and work closely with the Primary Care Providers to provide care as needed. The Primary Care Providers provide the medical management for the patients. Patients must meet criteria established for admission to the program.

Services provided:

Registered nurses provide assessment and monitoring; education for patients and caregivers on how patients can care for themselves at home. The HBPC nurses are the case managers in coordinating with the interdisciplinary team.

Social worker provides assistance with advanced directives, community resource referrals, and other concerns the patient/caregiver may have.

Dietitian provides nutritional assessment, evaluates nutritional status and implements a nutritional care plan; provides nutrition education to patients and their caregivers regarding meal planning, food purchasing, storage, and preparation.

Kinesiologist provides training to the patient and caregiver on exercises and daily tasks as needed

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Service Line News^{Cont.}

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to assist the patient in achieving/maintaining self care. The kinesiotherapist also does home safety evaluations and education in home safety.

Services not provided:

- Home health aides
- Homemakers and housecleaning
- Daily nursing or therapy
- Home IV therapy

Home Based Primary Care Hours:
Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Inpatient Care

Boosting Morale Through Recognition

In every organization, there's always one person who can uplift everyone's spirit by creating a sense of camaraderie at work. She's the one who shows an enthusiastic and sincere interest in her colleagues, makes a point of remembering coworkers' birthdays, and takes it upon herself to plan workplace celebrations.

In the Perianesthesia Care Unit that person is Frances "Fay" Hernandez, a staff registered nurse. Hernandez's colleague Cindy Terwilliger, RN, CPAN, CAPA, who

nominated her for a "The Customer Communicator" newsletter Peer-to-Peer award, describes Hernandez as "truly a nurse's nurse".

Hernandez goes out of her way to ensure her coworkers feel appreciated at the medical center. Whether it be for National Nurses Week, National Doctor's Day, or just recently, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists Week (January 25-31), Hernandez plans parties and celebrations to recognize other departments, as well as her own.

Hernandez's efforts to boost morale include helping colleagues to develop a better understanding of each other. She recently gave a presentation to medical center staff on personality types and learning how to respect each other's behavioral preferences and temperaments.

In the last few years, Hernandez also has been instrumental in earning formal recognition for her peers. "Fay has been blessed with an amazing ability to artistically put pen to paper," says Terwilliger. Hernandez's writing skills, which she draws on for awards nominations, have helped to earn at least five awards for her coworkers.

In addition to contributing to awards programs, Hernandez has put a lot of effort into other ways of recognizing her colleagues' contributions and celebrating their accomplishments. Last year, when two registered nurses retired from the operating room after more than 30 years of service, Hernandez put together a "This is Your Life" program for them. She compiled a synopsis of their personal and professional lives—from birth to retirement—which included memories, accomplishments, and photos. She arranged a slide show presentation, which she also transferred onto CDs for the nurses to keep. "It was wonderful," says Terwilliger. "They definitely treasured it. It's amazing how the whole department's morale is elevated when one of its members is acknowledged. Hernandez is constantly willing to go the extra mile to facilitate her peers being recognized. Now it's her turn."

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Resource and Financial Management

The employees of Medical Care Cost Recovery (MCCR) proved that they are made of the right stuff to get the job done. Throughout the fiscal year, the MCCR employees were striving to reach the goal that had been set by VISN. Brad Curry, MCCR Supervisor, and Diane Brezinski, AR Supervisor, were most instrumental in providing the manpower to sort and input all checks in a timely manner. The Insurance Coordinators, Billers/Coders, and Accounts Receivable Technicians developed the "One for all and all for one" mentality. Curry and Brezinski were there to cheer and encourage the team, and they would like to thank them for being there. They felt the need to express to Brad and Diane, two great supervisors, who were given awards as a small token of appreciation.

Shriners Clinic Helps Children

On January 31st the Los Angeles Shriners Hospital provided care for more than 50 children with orthopedic conditions or burn injuries in the Surgical Specialty Clinic and Radiology. Staff physicians, nurses, social workers and prosthetic specialists from the Shriners hospital were in the clinic to evaluate the children's progress, as well as, to examine new patients for inclusion into the hospital system. These children are from the Northern states of Mexico and all of Arizona. While waiting in the clinic, children and their parents were entertained by toys, bands, and clowns.

The Shrine hospital system consists of 22 hospitals, three of which are dedicated burn centers and 19 that are for orthopedic care. This orthopedic, burn and pediatric spinal cord injury care is provided at absolutely no cost to

the patient or their family. In 2004, Shriners Hospitals for Children will spend about \$18.00 per second or \$1.6 million every 24 hours to provide specialized care, which amounts to \$596 million for 2004. This money does not include government or insurance funding. It is all earned by the 191 Shrine Centers throughout North America. The care is provided to any child less than 18 years of age, regardless of race, origin, or religion.

The Shriners will be holding another clinic at CTHVAMC in October 2004. If you want to see what the Shriners do, come and check them out at one of their clinics!

Iraqi Veteran Shares His Thoughts on VA Healthcare

By Steve Garber

Ever wondered how members of our military view health care at VA? In this interview Dustin Hesche, upon returning from Iraq, shared what was unique about his tour of duty and also gave his impressions of his VA health care at our VAMC. I want to thank him for opening his heart to me and sharing his experiences.

■ What branch of the military did you serve in?

The Army Reserve

■ What unit were you with? What was your job? Where were you based?

348th Transportation, 88M – Transportation, Kuwait and Bagdad

■ What was the most challenging thing you faced while serving?

My daughter was born during my tour of duty and I had uncertainties of my daughter and wife's care. When I returned my daughter was five months old.

■ How did you relate to the other service members?

Without normal family/friends for support, I found it necessary to get friendly very quickly with others – to become a team player.

■ What was one of your most unique aspects of your tour?

I was driving in the desert with no roads and lots of dust. I wasn't able to see much of anything. I just had to try and follow the vehicle ahead.

■ What did you think about your VA health care?

I think the care is outstanding and I am very pleased. I had heard some rumors about the wait times. I was pleased that the wait times were not bad. I've only had to wait one time, due to a back-log. When I have seen the doctors, I have always received good care. The physicians are concerned about my needs, and not in a hurry.

■ Was it different than you expected?

Yes, happily so. I was concerned at first. But after my registration, all of my appointments have gone well.

■ What would you tell your fellow servicemen and servicewomen about your experience with the Phoenix VAMC?

I feel that any service member, who could benefit from the care, should utilize the system.

Mission Impossible Cont. from page 1

home. It was about 10 feet by 8 feet; the only piece of furniture was the bed. I hung my clothes on strings stretched across the back of the room and kept other items in Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) packing boxes. There were two bathrooms for the 12 occupants of the house and water was not potable. We could shower, but it was hit and miss, as water was not always available.

I made up my mind when I left that I would dress as a professional so I always wore a coat and tie. In retrospect this was not a practical decision as dry cleaning was not available and clothing could only be



Rabia Balkhi Women's Hospital chef serving a meal made of goat to the employees.

washed in bulk by the military. Local Afghans could iron shirts," he said.

Following the initial stun in both his professional and personal environment he set out to accomplish his mission. After much review and discussion with staff, the Health Ministry in Kabul, Department of Defense forces assigned there, members from the Department of Health and Human Services, USAID members and others Fears

came up with a plan.

"We determined we had two sets of problems. The first group dealt with the small facility, no funding, crowded location, no budget or personnel control, poor equipment, poorly paid staff and a high risk and illiterate patient population. The second group of problems was the hospital's high mortality/morbidity rate, the poorly maintained facility, poor electrical distribution, poor plumbing, inadequate water supply, a lack of management systems and management experience and poorly trained staff," he said.

He determined that the first group of problems could not be solved immediately but rather would require some long term plans and solutions that he probably couldn't provide in his 60-day detail. So he set about working on the second group of problems that could be accomplished through local improvement of systems with current outside help.

Using modified Baldrige criteria, they set up some objectives that could be accomplished in the short term. What they noticed early on was that the largest improvements in quality of care were made almost immediately in three areas. First, a recently graduated OB/GYN physician was recruited to mentor staff and interns, which resulted in an immediate decrease in maternal death rates, which boosted provider morale. Additionally, evidenced-based treatments were instituted and established. Secondly, an emergency room was opened. Since many of the women came in preeclampsic,

they knew they needed to create some type of triage. An emergency room area was prepared, equipment was set up and staff was trained to admit and treat emergency patients. Although this was accomplished with inadequate resources on hand, in the first week of implementation the lives of four patients were saved. The maternal death rates dropped from 12 per month to 2 per month. And third, was the arrival of a stateside pediatrician who trained staff in resuscitation of infants and helped provide training in the nursery.

In addition to quality of care improvements, administration also improved. A new generator and incinerator were furnished and activated by DoD, maintenance programs were created and staffs were trained on cleanliness issues to help reduce infections.

"We worked anywhere from eight to 12 hours a day when possible. I was there during Ramadan that limits Muslims to a four-hour day, so many days I could not spend a lot of time at the facility for lack of a translator. A large amount of work was conducted at the compound in working with the military to plan and evaluate what we needed to do and how to do it. Almost all of my time was used working on the project, as there was nothing else to do. I did some touring of the city and did attend an Afghan version of rugby on horseback using a dead goat as the ball. (I was the only American male in the crowd)," he said.

Although it was difficult for Fears to shift gears from the modern VA health care system to this one that needed the simplest of things,



Medical center Director John Fears outside the Rabia Balkhi Women's Hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan

in closing he says the results were heart warming.

"The day I left was also memorable in that the people I worked with were unbelievably emotional in saying goodbye. We had made a lot of progress as a team in solving some of the problems that did not require a lot of resources. The maternal death rate dropped from 12 the first month to 2 the second month we were there. The facility was cleaner and the infection rate was dropping. An electrical generator was installed and made usable for constant power. Biological waste was being handled through a new incinerator instead of being dumped in a pile outside the facility. A triage process was established and an emergency room was set up to immediately take care of mothers in shock. I think the people felt that Americans were really there to help. After being in Kabul and seeing the tremendous desire of these people to have us help them, I pray that we don't abandon them in this effort."

Construction News

Engineering has recently completed work on the contract for a new storm water retention basin northwest of the Ambulatory Care Center. The project was very successful and, as recent rains have shown, the medical center will now be free from the periodic closing of the 3rd Street access road due to flooding.

Work has just begun on a combined project to install a new Fire Alarm and Paging System throughout the medical center. The work will involve small crews of workmen on ladders installing new electrical conduit in the main corridors. Engineering will notify and coordinate exact dates as the contractor crews begin work in specific areas. Staff can expect all



Construction News

areas of the medical center to be affected by the installation for short periods of time.

Work is progressing on a project to convert all overhead light fixtures (those not previously upgraded) to energy saving tubes and ballasts.

The work crews are progressing through the medical center and Engineering will notify and coordinate exact dates as the contractor crews begin work in specific areas.

Final preparations are being made to begin construction of the 6th floor for the new Gastroenterology (GI) and Pulmonary Clinics. Work is scheduled to begin in May and last for approximately 12 months.

PR Providers

Recognizing that good public relations is generated by all employees, Public Affairs Officer Paula Pedene, APR likes to recognize those who assist in public relations endeavors. These PR Providers are given a small token of appreciation for their efforts.

Thanks to Dr. David Leicken for his assistance with Channel 12 regarding suicide prevention. Also thanks to Marty Mellstrom and Dr. David Leicken for their information on preventing suicide with a national magazine "Preventing Suicide". Thanks to David Polner for his assistance with the Shriner's Hospital visit and media support for the Desert Sun and Channel 12. And special thanks to all the staff in both Nursing Home Care Units One and Two, Ward 4D, Cynthia McCormack, Anthony DeFrancesco and Pat Arsiniega for their consistent media support with special visits prior to the Arizona State Primary elections.

Thank you all for being PR providers.